

### Chapter 3: Practical Politics

- The 1898 election season opened with Republican and Populist leaders loosing control of the Fusion movement. Both parties were fractured because of Governor Daniel L. Russell's inability to satisfy both sides. The resulting failure of Fusion spurred the rejuvenation of the Democratic Party.
- Furnifold Simmons was selected to chair the state Democratic Party campaign of 1898. Simmons and the Democrats developed a white supremacy argument as a primary campaign tool even as they pointed out shortcomings of the incumbent Fusion administration. Leading Democrat Josephus Daniels noted that Simmons used a three-pronged attack to win the election: men who could write, speak, and "ride."
  - ◇ Men who could write were used to create propaganda for newspapers and circulars provided by the Democratic Party. The *Raleigh News and Observer*, *Charlotte Observer*, *Wilmington Messenger* and the *Wilmington Morning Star* led the barrage.
  - ◇ Men who could speak were sent throughout the state to inflame white voters. Statewide speakers included future governor Charles B. Aycock, Robert Glenn, and Wilmington native Alfred Moore Waddell.
  - ◇ Men who could ride were recruited by clubs such as the White Government Union and Red Shirts. The clubs sought to intimidate blacks and press white Fusionists to vote for Democratic Party candidates.
- Wilmington's election campaign reflected the statewide program, and leading Democrats from across the state took special interest in securing victory in the city. Added to the campaign was a series of secret meetings in which leading white businessmen planned to retake control of the city after the election. The men, called the "Secret Nine," also mapped out a citywide plan of action in case of violence.
- Wilmington hosted a strong set of White Government Union clubs as well as an active group of Red Shirts. These men held rallies and paraded through African American neighborhoods brandishing guns on a regular basis.
- The city's major newspapers were full of Democratic campaign rhetoric and contributed to the increasing tensions by printing inflammatory articles concerning threats of black violence, reports of skyrocketing gun sales, glorified accounts of Red Shirt activity, and excerpts of speeches by men such as Alfred Moore Waddell.
- Waddell's role as a provocative speaker was central to the campaign. His speeches survive as examples of the extremes to which white Wilmington Democrats were willing to go in order to achieve victory.
- Support for the campaign grew on an almost daily basis, and Red Shirt activity increased in the days just prior to the election on November 8, 1898 as a means of intimidating and frightening blacks and white Republicans.